PUSSY UP!

A ONE ACT SHOW EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF HETERONORMATIVITY AND MICROAGGRESSIONS IN LGBTQIA+ YOUTH

HONORS THESIS

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by

Bryan Jorrel Fausto Javier

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	Thesis Supervisor:
	James Price, B.A. Department of Theatre and Dance
Approved:	
Heather C. Galloway, Ph.D. Dean, Honors College	

To my queer brothers, sisters, and anything and everything in between,		
Thank you		
For		
TOI		
your courage,		
your authenticity,		
<i>y</i>		
	your truth,	
		and your
		resilience.
You inspire me and others more than you know.		

Abstract:

Pussy Up! is a one act show that takes place in a world where homosexuality is the norm, male masculinity is insulting, and "manning-up" is pejorative. Taking place in sunny, suburban, Southern California, a group of teens disclose their experiences as "non-queer" youth and the role "homonormativity" and societal expectations play in their lives.

Touching on toxic masculinity, internal battles, and gender non-conformity, the absurdity in the concept is meant to lampoon on the unreal expectations and culturally instilled bias towards heteronormativity and the fixed gender roles that promulgates a queer person's childhood and adolescence. Through this piece, I will be highlighting the trials and experiences that members of the LGBTQIA+ community encounter on a daily basis. By switching the norm, I hope to accentuate the irrationality of fixed gender roles and bring forth the effects that microaggressions have on the mental, emotional, and sometimes physical health of its targets.

This thesis is inspired by my own personal experience as a gay male, a short film by "HaierUp," as well as studies done on the impact of sexual and gender microaggressions on various LGBTQIA+ community members.

Artist Foreword

For the majority of the LGBTQIA+ community, adolescence is an ongoing lesson of what is "appropriate" for one's assigned gender: what can boys wear, what do girls like, who can wear what color, what sports can each gender play? When we were children, we were whole-heartedly ourselves, unapologetic and proud of the idiosyncrasies that made us sparkle. We gravitated towards the interests that intrigued us, we authentically expressed our emotions with no inhibitions, and we saw the world for what it was—a playground with endless possibilities that always involved ice cream. We were as close to a blank canvas as we will ever be. But as queer children grow up, societal bias and expectations have a way of dulling our shine, bit by bit. Through the imposition of our influencers, our surroundings, and our day to day lives, these expectations can make us resent the qualities we once celebrated. I was no exception to this experience.

I have always been a writer. Ever since my sister first introduced me to the to the world of literature, I have always been one to write quixotic poems, cinematic adventures, and fanatical short stories. When I was initially introduced to the idea of an Honors Thesis, which seemed like ages ago, I always assumed that I would write a paper or a slam poem, because I had a tendency to stick to the mediums in which I excelled, apprehensive about the possibility of failing if I were to try the unknown. Well, in the fall of 2017, I had the incredible privilege of being asked to speak at the 2nd TEDxTexasStateUniversity conference. The topic, "Bridging Differences," came with limitless ideas which meant that I, of course, had none. Whilst brainstorming ideas for the talk, a sentence rang in my mind, loud and clear, "Be brave enough to write the stories

your heart is longing to tell but your mind is afraid to pen." I, though incredible apprehensive, decided to listen to it. After months of drafts, rewrites, and copious changes, I was able to stand on the TEDx stage and disclose the struggles I felt in bridging my father's idea of masculinity with my own truth as a queer youth.

Serendipitously, I had the pleasure of being in Jim Price's beginning playwriting class, which opened my eyes to my potential as a playwright. From my TEDxTalk, "Being Purple in a World of Reds and Blues," combined with what I had learned from Jim's class, came *Pussy Up!* an extrapolation of my queer experience.

What followed the initial conception of my thesis were a lot of iced americanos, distant stares out of windows, and slightly perplexed looks into my computer screen. Now that I had a topic, I had to figure out what aspect of the queer experience I wanted to focus on, which issues I was interested in highlighting, and how I could convey this in a way that was effective but also reflective of who I am as a person and as an artist. I knew that if I tried to tackle too many issues I would run the risk of having the "jack of all trades, master of none" syndrome. After some deliberation, I decided that while the main focus would be the effects of heteronormativity and microaggressions in LGBTQIA+ youth, because I am also an incorrigibly irreverent, crass, and unapologetic artist, it would also include comedic flairs that involved pop culture and parallelisms to provide social commentary. With those things set, I now had a baseline and a concept to guideline my thesis.

Because playwriting is a character and relationship based medium, I needed characters that had a very unique point of view. I wanted each character distinct from one another and I wanted each one of them to be lovable in their own unique way. They

needed to be real humans, not only so the audience can relate, but because I wanted to convey that these events happen to normal people like you and me. By personalizing the experience, I hope to instill a sense of familiarity to the audience, so they can watch the show and say, "I know those people."

When it came to the character descriptions, I made sure to use words like, "identifies as" as opposed to simply dictating "male" or "female" to make sure that the gender of the character isn't restricted to the biological sex of the actor portraying them. This is to include trans actors as well as anyone who identifies as something else besides their assigned sex. I also wanted to specify their race because as an actor of color, creating new work specifically for other actors of color is something I am passionate about.

Researching this topic was incredibly cathartic. It was as if I was finally able to express the feelings that always eluded its articulation. However, because I included the bisexual and transgender experience, I had to tread lightly in telling queer experiences that aren't my own. Luckily, I was blessed with very helpful queer friends and after extensive dialogue with them, as well as dozens of articles, studies, and papers, I was given the insight I needed to tackle this beast of a project. I felt that I had a duty to not only accurately portray these queer groups on paper, but to use this medium to honor the LGBTQIA+ people in my life who share my characters' triumphs and struggles on a daily basis.

I hope that you are as touched by these characters' stories as much as I am. I hope this piece of work opens your eyes, as it has mine. I hope you are implored to be the catalyst for change, the spark that lights a fire, and the first word in a long transcript of

dialogue. Most importantly, I hope that it inspires you to go out, and be the change you want to see in the world. This has been a wonderful experience for me and it is my honor and pleasure to share *Pussy up!* with you. Enjoy.

PUSSY UP!

A One-Act Play by Bryan Jorrel Javier

Characters:

Cal: A teenager with a big secret. An ambitious guy just trying to figure out his place in this world. Identifies as a heterosexual male. Person of color.

Robin: Cal's best friend. A highly emotional, over the top guy with an affinity for Nutella. Kind-hearted, but his overexcited tongue sometimes invites his foot in his mouth. Identifies as a homosexual male. Any race.

Mr/Ms. Kirk: THE Theatre Teacher. Sassy as can be and is the definition of savage. Identifies as homosexual, but can identify as any gender so prefix title can be adjusted as needed. Any race. Also plays the VOICE OFFSTAGE.

Brad: The announcer and moderator for the study. Identifies as male. Any race.

Chris: A kind-hearted football player whose brawn is matched by his compassion. The personification of a Golden Retriever. Identifies as a heterosexual male. Any race.

Soleil: An eccentric bisexual mechanic. She is completely secure in herself and has no filter when it comes to speaking her mind. Person of Color.

Mikkie: A Male to Female trans person of color. She's fierce, she knows it, but is much more substantial that everyone gives her credit to be. Identifies as a heterosexual female.

Setting:

Modern Day United States

Staged Reading Premiere: May 5th, 2018 at Texas State University

Original Cast:

Cal: Jorrel Javier

Robin: Michael Julliard Ms. Kirk: Juliette Redden

Brad: Brian Corkum Chris: Chris Clark Soleil: Blair Medina Mikkie: Micaela Lamas

Stage Directions: Emma Hearn Directed by Carlos Javier Rodríguez Scene I: Robin's Living Room.

Lights up on a home-y, suburban living room. Robin is on the couch eating Nutella by the spoonful. He is watching RuPaul's Drag Race. The sound of the TV is heard in the background. He is screaming fervently at the screen, similar to how the heteros are with football.

ROBIN

CHARLIE! Girl. COME ON! Charlie, move your ass! Do something! Jesus Christ, you're in the Olympics of drag and you're just standing there pointing your—FLIP KICK TWIRL—SOMETHING! It's a lip sync for your life not a lip sync for your ham sandwich, girl! Shit, GODDAMN IT!

VOICE OFFSTAGE

HEY! Language.

ROBIN

Sorry!

(There is a knock on the door. He doesn't look away from the screen) Come in!

Cal enters. He walks over to the couch and plops down next to Robin.

CAL

Oh god, Drag Race again?

ROBIN

What do you mean Drag Race again? Drag race is literally the only thing worth watching on TV. Except maybe the Great British Baking Show. It's church. Are you coming for my religion?

CAL

Ok, calm down. Oh shit is this the Charlie Hides lip sync? This is all Twitter and Facebook has been talking about. Did you hear? Apparently, there was even some riot after the lip sync because some super fans were really upset about it and they started flipping cars and looting stores or whatever.

ROBIN

See that's extra. Some fans are too much. Just scream at the TV like the rest of us.

CAL

Right, because that's so much better.

(Robin clicks his tongue)

I just don't really get the appeal of this. Like great they can do their makeup and walk in heels—but why is that so admirable? Like who really cares? You have so many kids looking up to these queens, eating their cereal, buying their shoes and makeup line. Like the emphasis of drag in college is so high as if everyone wants to be a drag queen. Or a Musical Theatre actor. Or a cheerleader. Like shit, not everyone wants to be that. Some of us just want to lead boring lives in cubicles and type shit on a computer. But no. You MUST be into drag and dancing, because even if you have a 4 point fucking 0, you aint shit if you don't have that on your resume.

VOICE OFFSTAGE
Language!
CAL Sorry!
ROBIN Daaamn, someone's a little spicy today. What's up? Tell Zaddy what's wrong.
CAL I heard back from J.U.
ROBIN Shit, AND?
CAL I got in.
ROBIN
OH YAY! (beat) Wait so why are you salty then?
CAL They didn't give me enough money.
ROBIN Well no college ever gives anyone enough money. What about that scholarship you applied for—oh. You didn't get the scholarship?
CAL No.
ROBIN Oh honey. I'm so sorry. Fuck. I know you worked so hard on that application.

CAL

It's fine. I mean I still got into the school. I just...They said that even though the football credit and the letterman's club was great, it would've "behooved me" if I had like a theatre club or cheerleading class on my transcript. They said this year's pool of applicants has been the strongest it's been, and with their limited funds and my particular transcript they could only give me a partial scholarship.

ROBIN

Well that's still money!

CAL

Sure. But it's literally not even anything. They were basically saying, "I'm sorry but your transcript is a little too breeder for us so we can *give* you money, but like not *a lot* of money. Just enough to say we're not heterophobic."

ROBIN

Can they even do that?

CAL

I mean they did it, so I guess. I don't know. It's gonna be a stretch for my moms. They're applying to receive another child and we all know that process is very expensive. Luckily, they're females so the process is a little easier, but it's still a lot of money.

ROBIN

Well why don't you work at the fertility center! My friend worked there as a surrogate for two years and made a FUCKTON of money. Paid for her tuition at Abe Lincoln for 4 years.

CAL

Yeah but you're forgetting one thing. I don't have a uterus, dumbass.

ROBIN

Okay but I'm sure they'd need your little swimmers.

CAL

Nah they don't.

ROBIN

How can you be so sure.

CAL

Because I already checked. Any other suggestions?

ROBIN

Can you reapply or appeal? Would it be too late to join theatre? Cuz like what if you did the fall play and then reapply or something?

CAI

How would that help? They're doing Romeo and Juliet which is the most hetero play ever written. J.U already hates the fact that I'm fucking straight.

ROBIN

Yeah but it's something! Like it's still theatre. I mean it's Shakespeare, for Beyonce's sake, no one's gayer than Shakespeare.

CAL

I guess. I don't know.

ROBIN

Well it wouldn't hurt your chances to try. And it's gonna be a great show, I'm so excited they're doing R and J because I, like, STAN Shakespeare. Like, great plays, visceral writing, and equal opportunity for everyone! WIG. He was *very* gay, but gave ample representation to the straight community! Men in dresses, a character named <u>Bottom</u>, lots of Fairies, AND heterosexual lovers? COME. ON. It's basically West Hollywood. Billy Shakes essentially invented gay culture, included some straights, and called it a day. If he was on Grindr, I'd send him a nude so he can write a sonnet about my ass. Like a nice nude. Where the lighting was on point.

(CAL rolls his eyes. Robin looks to the TV)

Oh man not this commercial again.

CAL

What commercial is it?

ROBIN

It's for this study they're doing. I don't really know what it is but it's always on. I never really pay attention but it seems like maybe one of / those commercials where they...

/Lights dim on the boys. Robin's volume fades out. Cal's focus is on the TV. We are now in the world of the commercial. A single spotlight shines on BRAD THE ANNOUNCER. Two girls accompany him. This can be a full-blown production number with music and dancing or as simple as him standing there. Full freedom is encouraged and advised.

BRAD

Hey you! Yeah you! Do you find yourself looking at the opposite sex? Do you prefer Britany and Jane more than you do me? Do you feel that even though your Nutella eating best friend is great, he doesn't quite understand your struggle and so you can't truly open up about what you're going through? Or perhaps you're applying for colleges and you're

finding that your experience is a lot different from the theatre queens and cheerleading bunnies.
CAL
That's oddly specific.
BRAD If this is you, you're a fit for our study! We're looking for 4 high school students who identify as anything other than gay. You will be generously compensated. And we have snacks. If interested, visit our website below for requirements. Offer ends soon, so act fast! It just might help with some of your college expenses, Cal. Do it, Cal. Do it. Cal. Cal. Cal. Cal. Cal. Cal. Cal. Sprace (the voice starts to overlap with Robin's. Brad and the girls go away)
ROBIN
Cal. Cal. Hellllloooooooo? Bruh.
CAL
Huh what
ROBIN You ok? You zoned out for a second. I was talking to you and you just, HIZZUK.*
*any indistinguishable noise is accepted
CAL Yeah. uhm—
ROBIN You sure? Because you got that look on your face where you're contemplating whether your fart's gonna be wet or dry.
CAL I'm fine.
ROBIN Ok. Well do you wanna play some Madden or FIFA? Make you feel better?
CAL No I'm good. Think I'm gonna head out, though. I'll see you tomorrow?
Cal begins to leave.

ROBIN

Sure. Be safe! Lemme know if you need to talk.

CAL

Yeah for sure. I'll, uh, see ya later

Right before the door:

ROBIN

Love you!

CAL

Ewh. That's gay bro.

(they both chuckle)

Love you too.

CAL exits. Lights fade out.

Scene II: Cal's Room

Lights up on a bedroom. It is decorated with pictures of football athletes, women, and food. One poster displays "Gay isn't the only way, Straight is a direction too!"
Cal enters and immediately goes on his laptop.

CAL

C-P-U-Auditions-dot-Com. Okay here we go. Yaddayaddayadda. Okay, "to apply please submit a video answering the following questions as well as a headshot and resume. Feel free to be as creative as you'd like. Blahblahblah the deadline is March 19th, 20—oh shit.

(checks his phone)

FUCK that's tomorrow. Shit okay. Okay. Ahh. What's a headshot?

(he googles it)

oh so just a picture of my face? Okay, I got one of those, amazing. Let's look at these questions.

(he reads them)

Okay. I can do this.

He rummages to find his camera. Once he finds it, he proceeds to set up a little "studio" to film his video. He sets up the camera When he is ready he clicks the camera to record and begins. There should be a clear distinction of when he's being himself and being the oncamera version of himself.

CAL

(he tries several greetings, each one different than the last)

Hi. Hello! Hi there! Good Afternoon, sirs. Oh Jesus this is horrible. It's ok I'll just edit it out. Hi! My name is Calvin Santos. But I usually just go by Cal. I'm fairly new to this so you'll have to bear with me.

(He looks at the computer for questions)

I'm 18 years old. I'm a senior at WTD High. Okay what's next. "Tell us about yourself and if you had any struggles about being straight, talk about that." Ugh I hate that question. Okay.

This section can include music fading in, or playing in the background. This can also be pre-filmed and played via projector. It's completely up to interpretation.

So from a young age, I was never your cookie cutter kind of guy.

I was more of the hand shaped, slightly crooked, plopped-on-the-pan-and-hope-for-thebest kind of cookie.

If I were a finger, I'd be a thumb, slightly different from the rest,

If I were underwear, I'd be a thong—stylish, controversial, and great at making an ass of myself.

And if Roses are red, and violets are blue, I was always somewhere in between.

Like when I was 4, I asked my neighbor not to pour glitter in my hair because I thought it would look too colorful so I rubbed some dirt on mine instead. I skipped as though I was in a meadow of flowers, each muddy strand of hair ostentatiously drifting in the wind, worthy of a serenade by Pocahontas.

I came home and I was met with a heavy shampooing accompanied by a stern voice that I would grow to know too well.

"you're a boy. Boys don't do mud."

The first time I badly scraped my knee, I didn't really cry.

As my Grandmother poured alcohol on my scarlet tainted knees I sat, breathing so sporadic that talking was problematic, my bottom lip quivered like the quaking needle of a seismograph. But I refused to show emotion. I wanted to be strong. And my grandma said

"you need to learn how to cry. No one likes a stoic man. You're a man aren't you? Real men cry. You need to pussy up."

When I was 9 my dad tried to teach me how to tap dance. He was trying to teach me how shuffle and I just wasn't getting it. Of course, by this time, I was hungry, and didn't want to do it anymore. I told him I wanted to play football instead. He said,

"What kind of man are you gonna be if all you wanna do is throw a ball and run around on a field. Anyone can catch and throw. This is a skill that'll actually make you money."

Now my father never yelled at me. In fact he was the exact opposite.

He was and is incredibly supportive of everything I do.

But I almost wish that he did. I wish he blatantly disapproved and outwardly screamed. Because his plainly spoken comments implied that these expectations were supposed to come naturally to me. That I wasn't getting something right.

And soon the smile I never learned how to wield was reduced to lips held together by every masculine failure, apprehensive that someone would strip me of my façade and discover that I didn't know what it meant to be a "man."

Every day, he'd unknowingly plunge a dagger in my heart.

"Why is your shirt blue? Why isn't your hair done? Why do you like Football? You don't want to do musicals? You're a man aren't you? Come on. Pussy up."

His comments replayed in the back of my mind like a broken record.

His words lingered like the aftermath of a wildfire.

I wore his seemingly innocent sentiments like a suffocating sweater for the better part of 18 years.

And with every inhale, the fumes of my excessive masculinity would pervade my lungs and destroy me, bit by bit.

I had hoped that as I let the constricting chemicals out, that maybe his words would follow.

That maybe I wouldn't be reminded of the expectations I couldn't meet with every word I spoke and every article of clothing I own.

Every day, I would climb uphill, carrying this immensely disheartening boulder that turns motivation to mud, determination to dirt, and will to dust.

My stomach became accustomed to the gnawing feeling of being the son that never lived up to his old man's manly expectations.

I started to believe that I was insane

That who I am is a disgrace

that nothing I achieve will ever be good enough because I like Jane instead of Dick.

Look. I just wanted to be normal.

And I never felt like I was.

He walks over to his camera and turns it off. Blackout.

Kirk stands on the stage with a pile of papers. They are speaking to the audience as though they are their classroom. Among the audience members are ROBIN and CAL.

KIRK

I just want you all to know. That if Shakespeare were still alive today, he'd take Romeo and Juliet's potion, and inject it up his asshole after seeing all those performances. Did any of you even prepare for this? Hmm? Do you Neanderthals not take this seriously?

(points to ROBIN)

You. Raegan.

(ROBIN points to himself)

Yes. You. Did you even practice that monologue? You sounded like someone took your throat, squeezed it dry, peed on it, shoved it back, and it never went back to normal. Why were you screeching? Literally no one with the ability to hear would like the sounds that came out of your mouth. And I swear to god if you do another death drop in Mercutio's death, I will literally gouge my eyes out. Just reverse it and drop dead. It's not that hard! (points to a male audience member wearing black)

And you. What's your name again?

(call them by their name. If they don't answer, say: HELLO. I'M WAITING 'til they give their name.)

Right, _____.

Why did you think it was appropriate to wear that? You look like a fucking breeder. Where the hell do you shop? Walmart? Never wear that shirt again. God you look like a you're gonna fucking reproduce every time you open your mouth. Like a whole-ass fertilized egg is just gonna shoot out of your nose if you sneeze. Wear some color next time. Jesus. You're never gonna play any roles in theatre if you don't learn how to act gayer. Pussy the fuck up.

(Addressing everyone; calm but intense.)

You are all disappointing. You don't deserve to be on stage. You don't deserve to say these words. You're better off playing football. Or fixing cars. Like little breeders. But I have to produce this show somehow. So. The callback list will be on my door by tomorrow at noon, with the callbacks happening at 6. Come prepared. Now get the hell out of my classroom.

Kirk Exits. ROBIN and CAL get up from their seats and walk upstage where they have their bags. Cal is on his phone.

ROBIN

I really don't know what Kirk means! Like, I am in confusion! I thought I was amazing.

CAL

ROBIN Also do you think they're ever gonna know that my name isn't Raegan? CAL Just be happy they got the first and last letter correct. Kirk called me "it" for two years. **ROBIN** I guess. But dude. My death as Mercutio was so motivated! Like I was so in it! I was like *Kak-kada-kakak BLEH. And then kakadakak-AGH! And then BLIIIIYYYY. And finally Shablam GAAAAAAH! Oh honey, I may have been dying honey, but I was LIVIN, Hoooooneeyyyy. I can't believe Kirk thought I was screeching. *These are in reference to vogue commentators and should be spoken in that spirit CAL Right, how could they ever think you were screeching. (beat) HOLY SHIT. Dude. Dude. DUDE. **ROBIN** What? What happened? CAL Okay, do you remember that commercial that was on during Drag Race? **ROBIN** Yeah? **CAL** I went home and applied for it. **ROBIN** That Pussy Up study? CAL Yeah. I got it dude. **ROBIN** You got it? CAL YEAH!

(not looking up)

I'm sure you were amazing, buddy.

ROBIN

Hell yeah! Isn't it like a fuckton of money? Like a good amount of cash? Like "can see Hamilton on Broadway with good orchestra seats" amount of cash?!

CAL

I mean it's \$300. So kinda?

(he calls the number)

ROBIN

Okay so maybe balcony. But holy shit. What do you have to do? Oh my god, what if they have celebrity guests and you become famous. IF YOU MEET MERYL STREEP/ YOU HAVE TO INTRODUCE ME.

CAL

/SHH! Hi this is Calvin Santos. I just got the email from Judy? Right. I just wanted to confirm that I am very interested. Will a contract be sent? Ok. Uh-huh. Sweet. I'll look over the contract and I'll let you know. Thanks!

ROBIN

So what do you have to do for the study?

CAL

I don't know. I guess we'll find out.

Blackout.

Scene IV: The Study

Lights up on a regular classroom. It can be decorated in whatever fashion but on a whiteboard are the words PUSSY UP! There are 4 chairs laid out in a semi-circle. a desk with paperwork and refreshments, and a chair. BRAD is in the room shuffling the papers. CAL enters.

CAL

(peeks in)

Hi, is this the correct room?

BRAD

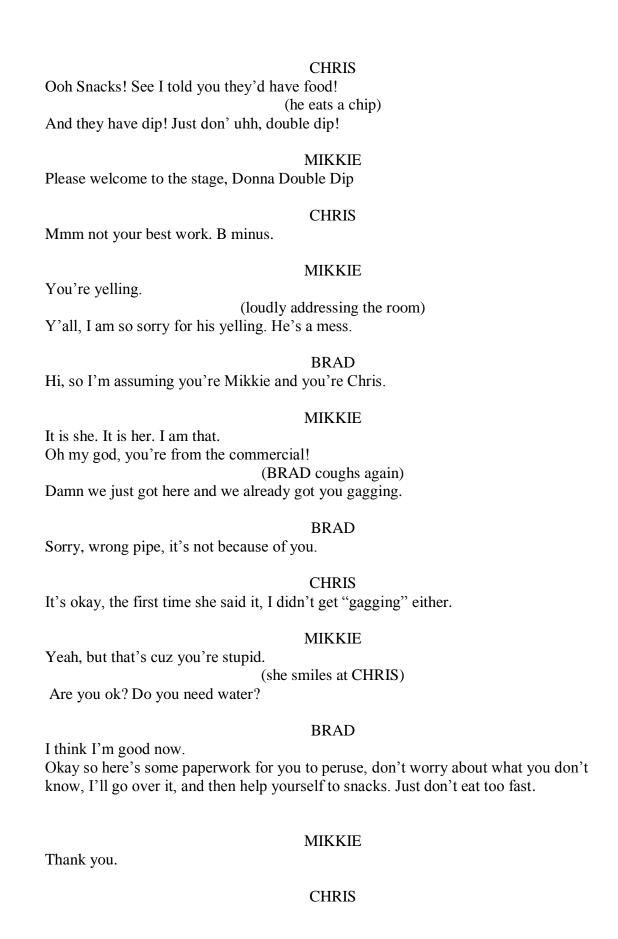
Well that depends.

CAL

On?
BRAD On what you're lookin' for?
CAL I'm lookin' for 314a, for the, uhh, Pussy Up studywhich you have on the wall. Nice Hi, I'm Calvin.
BRAD Hi, Calvin, I'm Brad.
CAL Right! From the commercial.
BRAD (chuckles) Yup, that's me. I'm gonna be the moderator for the study. You go by Cal, right?
CAL Yup.
BRAD Sweet. It's nice to meet you.
CAL It's nice to meet you, too.
(an awkward moment of silence)
BRAD Uhm paperwork. Take one of each,
CAL Lit.
BRAD And help yourself to the refreshments. They're totally up for grabs.
CAL Oh hell yeah. (he takes some snacks and sits on one of the chairs and reads over the paperwork)
BRAD

We're gonna go over the paperwork in a bit too, so don't be alarmed if there are things you don't know. I'm gonna go over that. (SOLEIL walks in)
Hey there, are you looking for the study group?
SOLEIL
Yeah. Hi I'm Soleil.
BRAD Hey, I'm Brad.
SOLEIL From the commercial! I didn't know <i>you</i> were gonna be here. If I'd-a known, I would've dressed up a bit, I look like a potato. (She looks at CAL)
Baked like it too.
(she laughs)
BRAD I'm going to be the moderator for the study.
SOLEIL
I'm ok with that. (she gives him a flirty look)
BRAD (chuckles uncomfortably)
Right. Uhm, so take one of each, help yourself to refreshments and we'll get started in a
bit. (he gives her some paperwork)
SOLEIL
Thank you. (She sits a chair away from BRAD. They acknowledge each other and keep reading. Some moments go by and BRAD chokes on his snack)
Are you ok? Need mouth to mouth?
BRAD
(still somewhat coughing) No, I'm good. Justwrong pipe.
MIKKIE and CHRIS walk in.

MIKKIE Alriiighhtttt bitches let's get this party started!!!



Thanks, man.

BRAD

Aaaand amazing that's everyone.

(he closes the door)

Great so while you guys are still looking over the papers, I'll just kinda talk it over. This study was made because a professor over at J.U. is doing his Doctorate over the effects of Microaggressions on people who don't identify as gay. We picked you all because we were very moved by the video submissions you turned in and we felt like this specific group of people would move this project along nicely. Now, you all can be compensated up to \$300. Now I say "up to" because you are initially awarded \$300, but certain things said and certain actions can subtract money. For example: invalidating someone's experience can subtract \$10. Saying a microaggression will cost you \$20. Etc. Etc. This is meant to put weight on these instances, and make you realize that even though you yourself are part of the community, you may still be a perpetrator of these things. This is also to suggest that maybe sometimes we are the worst perpetrators. That being said, if you have questions or you are unsure, you may say, "pardon my ignorance" and whatever you say, even if its microaggressive, will not be held against you.

MIKKIE

So if I don't know if a phrase is microaggressive, I just have to say, "pardon my ignorance" and I won't be docked money?

BRAD

Correct. This is to promote education, and give the place a safe space. You won't be punished, but you won't be awarded either. Once the money is lost, the money is lost. Just don't be a dick, and you'll be fine. Any questions?

SOLEIL

By invalidating experience, what do you mean?

BRAD

It's just that. To negate whatever experience another is saying. So if I were to say, "I am I a bisexual male," any comments that suggests to nullify that sentence of identity such as, "...for now" or "Are you sure you're not just a hetero?" will result in compensation deduction.

SOLEIL

That example is too real, and like hella close to home, but yeah I got you. Are you?

BRAD

Am I what?

SOLEIL

Bisexual.

BRAD

Does that matter?

SOLEIL

Well I mean aside from personal gain, yeah. You're moderating the study so like why would I wanna open up to someone that wouldn't know my struggle? Like who's to say that you or your presence wouldn't invalidate what we say?

BRAD

That's valid. Yes, I am. Which is why I volunteered to moderate this study. I'm very passionate about this subject.

SOLEIL

Ok. I fuck with that. Good to know.

BRAD

I'm glad. So, the rest of those papers are things we've already discussed with you all—contracts, stipulations, all that stuff. The only thing that needs to be signed is the final paper in the back. Any questions about anything? No? Then let's get on with the introductions then. Tell us your name, what your sexual orientation is, an interesting fact about yourself, and what made you sign up.

Everyone looks around but doesn't say anything

SOLEIL

I'll start. Hey, all you beautifully non-gay people. My name is Soleil. I'm a bisexual female. Meaning you buy me something, I can get sexual.

(she laughs)

Just kidding. I mean I am bi, but normal bi. I play for both teams, depending on the day. Uhm, an interesting fact about me is that I am a mechanic and I have piercings on my body that...heighten sensations.

(she winks at BRAD)

Why I signed up? I mean the money was definitely a nice push, but I've always been a huge advocate for bisexual visibility and I felt like this may be a good way to set the record straight so to speak. See what I did there. Uhm. Yeah. I'm done.

(BRAD nods to CHRIS)

CHRIS

Hey, I'm Chris. I'm kind of the poster child for heterosexuals to be honest. I'm what parents don't want their kids to be friends with because they think I'll infect their child with the straight. Interesting fact about me is I play football. And I can eat an entire large pizza in 10 minutes. I wanted to do the study because it was a very long journey for me to accept who I am, and I wish that there was something like this when I was in the closet. I wanna help people with my experience. Or at least put my story out there so that if

anyone needs it, they can have access to it. I'm just trying to pay it forward I guess. So yeah.

MIKKIE

I'll go next. Hey everyone! My name is Mikkie. I'm a Male to Female trans woman, but I still like men so I identify as a heterosexual trans female. Basically, I'm just one minority stacked on top of another. Interesting fact about me, so I met Betty White, and she said I have great hair. I told her, I bought it myself and she didn't get what I meant. Bless her old, white, lesbian heart. Uhhhh I, too, wanted the money because like uhm hello who wouldn't, but I also felt that my input was important. There's never any trans representation and I'm tired of it, so I figured, why not me? So I applied. And here I am!

BRAD

That's great, Mikkie. Your input is absolutely important, and I'm glad you're here. Alright and last but not least?

CAL

Hi. I'm Cal. Uhm. I'm not really out to anyone but my best friend. Oh I'm straight. So there's that. Uhm. Interesting fact about me, is that for all of middle school, I wore a vest daily. It's kinda how I knew I was straight, fashion didn't make a lot sense to me. Uhm. I really only applied because of the money. And I know we're being videotaped, that's not gonna be published or anything, right? Like y'all aren't gonna Chorus Line me? I had talked about it on the phone and I just don't feel comfortable with—

BRAD

Video will not be published and all your names will be changed.

CAL

I'm sorry, I don't mean to be that person. I'm just...Like I'm surprised I even submitted.

BRAD

Cal. You're fine. We get it. We've all been there.

CAL

Right. Uhm. Well yeah. The money. And that's about it.

BRAD

Incredible. So let's get started then, shall we? Does anyone here actually know what a microaggression is?

CAL

I googled it after I read the study goal when I was applying so I could give you the internet definition...

BRAD

Let's start there then. What is the internet definition?

CAL

It's not verbatim but I remember it saying that it's actions, like both verbal and non-verbal, that convey hostile or negative attitude towards like, a specific race or culture. The term originated in 1970's because of comments to races.

MIKKIE

So it's when people say racist shit?

CHRIS

Well, like yes, but it can apply to different things as well. Like heterosexuality.

SOLEIL

Or Bisexuality. Or Transgenderism. But it's usually done in a way that's very discreet and sly. Like they're usually coming from people with good intentions and kind hearts. They just don't realize they're being microaggressive.

BRAD

Correct. So the term "Pussy Up" *is* a form of Microaggression. And I'm sure we've all heard that before. And even though it's usually meant to encourage bravery and perseverance, it's actually saying that those who don't "Pussy Up," or more specifically, heterosexuals or those who are more masculine, are lesser than or inferior. Does that make sense?

(they all nod)

So we've all definitely experienced this, yes?

MIKKIE

Bitch have I./

SOLEIL

/Literally just happened like 30 minutes ago.

BRAD

Thought so. Would anyone care to share or elaborate? (moment of silence)

CAL

I mean the thing is, because I'm still in the closet, I hear it all the time. Not to me, but towards other heteros. Like one time my straight friend was in theatre and landed a double pirouette. He was super proud of it because he was working so hard to land it, and someone went, "wow you're so graceful for a hetero. Good Job." Like obviously it was meant to be a compliment but I just saw his balloon pop, ya know? Like all his hard work was deduced to his sexuality as if being straight came with innate disabilities.

CHRIS

YES! Or one time I said, "I gotta to freshen up real quick, my face feels oily" and someone said, "oh damn that was such a gay thing for you to say Chris! Good job!" And it took me a second to realize, that sure it was meant as a compliment but it implied that I should WANT to be gay. As if it was something I needed to strive for because I wasn't, ya know? I was just being conscious of the well-being of my skin! I was just trying to take care of the money maker.

BRAD

And how did those things make you feel?

CHRIS

Annoyed. Confused. Kinda Angry. A little sad—I don't know. Like if it happened once, I really wouldn't care. But after four and a half years of shit like that, it gets old, ya know? It made me feel inferior. And what's worse is if I say anything about it, they always just brush it off. They're always like, "oh you're too sensitive calm down."

CAL

Or my personal favorite: 'My best friend is straight, it's fine.' And it's like, you know what? No, it's not fine. Your straight friend doesn't speak for me. Just 'cause he doesn't mind that you call him breeder on a daily basis, doesn't mean I won't either. Just because you joke around about the fact that it's so great that he's straight but still loves makeup doesn't mean that it doesn't make me feel like shit when you say that I should love makeup because I'm a man and that's what we're supposed to like.

BRAD

So would I be correct to assume that part of this problem is geared toward gender norms and what each sexuality should or shouldn't be into correct?

CAL

Yeah. Like I always feel that I'm missing something. That because I like certain things or don't like others, that I'm fucked up—like I'm not normal. And that feeling fucking sucks. So to be reminded of it every day with comments like that, it's infuriating after a while.

CHRIS

Like why the fuck do we have things labeled as gay or straight anyway. I mean, why are we so obsessed with separating the two? It's like if I like something I should be able to like it without people labeling it as straight or gay. Maybe I just wanna eat a hot dog. Or get some fro-yo. How am I any less straight or gay for it? It's just annoying because for all of freshman and sophomore year I felt like I couldn't be myself. I was angry all the time because I couldn't change who I am. I felt suppressed and trapped and unhappy. It's like I wasn't even welcome in my own body. I felt so worthless, I felt like I had to convince my own shadow that I'm worth sticking by.

CAL

It made me feel alienated. Like I didn't belong. Like the Cal that everyone knew was this shell and I was inside, peering out of the window. I felt like such an outsider.

SOLEIL

Right. Like we're invisible. Like we're screaming to deaf ears. I know personally, I felt this pressure to be like everyone else even though I knew I wasn't like them.

CHRIS

And what's worse is that I felt like nothing I did would ever be good enough because I didn't like the gender I "was supposed to" like. I mean, I'm a damn good athlete. I get great grades. But everyone's like "let's disregard all of that and focus on the fact I wouldn't have a husband." Like I get reduced to just my sexuality and I'm so much more than that. You know what I mean?

SOLEIL

No, yeah, I feel that. For me, I always felt like because I went both ways, my parents always saw it as this "fixable" problem, because I'm only PARTLY straight. They'd acknowledge my accomplishments and then add a comment regarding my sexuality. Like once I showed them a car I souped up and they said, "wow, our daughter is so talented. Now you just have to get over that little problematic phase and you'd make a woman very happy." And I was like, there's no phase. There's no problem to fix! I am fine!

BRAD

If I had a dollar for every time someone asked if I was still in that bi phase, I'd probably be able to single-handedly compensate everyone for this study.

SOLEIL

YES! And what's worse is people in our own community pull that shit too! Like the whole, "awh we were bi once too but now we're just straight. You'll get there."

CHRIS

Damn, I'm guilty of that. I've absolutely, definitely said that to one of my straight friends. I mean, I came out as bi first, but I always knew I was straight. I was using it as a stepping stone because I was scared to fully come out.

SOLEIL

But see just because it was a stepping stone for you doesn't mean it's a stepping stone for everyone. Heteros are the worst perpetrators of bisexual invalidations sometimes, and it sucks because they're supposed to be part of your team. Like they're supposed to have your back, so it feels like I'm being betrayed by my own people.

CHRIS

That's what he said too. I felt horrible. We eventually talked about it, and I apologized. But it opened my eyes to how easy it is to invalidate someone. And I felt even worse because I was not only one of his best friends but I've always been so adamant about the proper treatment of straight people.

SOLEIL

Yeah. Well. You live and you learn. And you know, don't get me wrong, I love my straight side, but being with a woman is so nice sometimes. Not having to look around before you kiss her. Getting to hold her hand in public whenever you want, wherever you are. Never having to be on alert when you show affection. It just makes me feel a little normal. Not that I'm ashamed of being with a guy, but it's like, ya know. It's nice to have some of the homo privilege every once in a while. People take that shit for granted.

CAL

I've never thought about that. I've never been in a relationship with a girl. Or talked to one romantically. Or kissed one actually. So I never had to think about things like that. About not being able to do the things that the gays do.

SOLEIL

Oh, you have to. You have to be smart. People are fucked up. My friend got beat up by an aggressive gay guy once because he thought my friend was giving him "Breeder eyes" and he "aint no breeder."

CAL

Sometimes I wish it were the opposite. Like I wish being gay was the odd man out. Just so the gays can know what we're feeling.

CHRIS

Pfft right. Like that'll ever happen. Can you imagine? A world where the majority of people are straight?!

(erupt in laughter)

Oh man. That was a good one. We needed that. But yeah. That'd be wild.

SOLEIL

So wild. But yeah, when I'm in a gay relationship, I relish not having to do any of the safety checks.

CHRIS

Must be nice to have that. What I would give to be able to hold a girl's hand in public without worrying about being the next hate crime. Like I never feel comfortable holding a girl's hand for too long in public because people might think we're "asking for it." It also doesn't help that I'm built like a brick house so people can clock the straight from a mile away.

CAL

I'm not exactly the gayest build either, but I still get some of that gay privilege. Like in public when I'm walking I don't necessarily scream straight. Like after getting to know me, people always kind of always knew I was straight. But I mean I pass. Like I knew the tricks to feign homosexuality.

CHRIS

Some of us don't get that. The way we talk gives away the fact that we're straight. The way we move gives it away. So I mean, I'm not shaming you for your privilege nor am I trying to make you feel bad for having it, but I'm glad you know that you have it.

CAL

Yeah.

SOLEIL

Yup.

BRAD

How about you Mikkie. You've been very quiet. Any thoughts on the matter?

MIKKIE

I mean. They said it all. My thing is, my experience is all that, but 3 times more intense. And I hope I'm not invalidating anyone's experience, pardon my ignorance if I am, but I'm saying that I not only experience everything you guys talked about, but more. I don't really pass as gay. And because I'm pre-op and early on in my transition, I don't always "pass" as a woman either. Now I personally don't give a shit, like I don't need that for my womanhood. Would it help with my body dysphoria, sure, but I don't think I'm any less woman because of my physical state. But to others, they get so hung up on this dichotomy of how everyone should act or look.

So I get what you're all saying. And I experience that too. But people invalidate not just my sexual identity as a heterosexual woman, but my entire existence, all the time. They'd say, you're not a fucking woman, look at that beard. Or they'd comment about my chest. Saying how I don't have boobs so I'm still a man. Or they'd call me a freak and say that's all I'll ever be and they hope they find me in their bathrooms so they can beat the shit outta me. It's like I'm not a human being with feelings standing in front of them. And you'd think it'd get easier after so many years but it doesn't. It hurts. It hurts a lot. They deduce me to this status of being less than human. They deny my reality as a person, impose how I should be, and then are still unhappy if I do comply with whatever unreasonable expectation they have. It's just a lose-lose situation all the time for me. I'm never enough. Do you know how it feels to feel like you will never be enough to be considered human? It fucking blows. And you guys have to check your surroundings when you want to be with your significant others, but I have to do that just walking around. I have to do that when I have to pee. I have to do that when I'm doing groceries or shopping for clothes. I worry about my safety constantly. I can never allow myself to truly let go when I'm out with friends because all it takes is one mistake to be the next Viccky Gutierrez.

SOLEIL

Pardon my ignorance, but who is she?

MIKKIE

A Trans woman of color who was stabbed and set on fire in her own home. Happened just last month.

CAL

That's awful.

MIKKIE

Yeah it's terrifying. Because that could be me. And I'm a strong woman. I really am, but I'm also just a person. And I wish I had a community to help me when it gets tough, but like being a person of color and being trans *and* being a hetero, like you just don't do that. You can't just be a Trans breeder in my culture. My dads invalidate my existence every day. They still call me by my given boy name. They refuse to acknowledge me by my preferred gender pronoun. Like it's hard. People are denying you guys of your sexuality. And that's unfair, I get it. But my humanity is denied every day. My safety is denied every day. My existence is denied. Every. Fucking. Day.

(she breaks down. CHRIS goes up to her and consoles her)

I'm sorry. I don't usually get emotional.

BRAD

It's ok. That's what this is for. We want to understand how these situations make you feel. We want to make people realize that these aren't just words. These are daggers, with the capability of hurting people.

SOLEIL

I'm sorry sweetie. I hate that you have to go through that.

CAL

Me too.

MIKKIE

Thank you. Some days are easier than others, but you can only hold it in for so long.

CHRIS

Well you know I'm always here for you.

SOLEIL

And so will I. Just lemme know when you need me, girl.

CAL

Yeah same. You can always hit us up. We'll be your community.

MIKKIE

(fighting back tears)

Thank you so much. That means a lot to me.

BRAD

You'll always have a family here Mikkie. Does anyone else have anything to add before I move on?

(silence)

okay. So to tie this all into the study, the research they've done so far concluded that there are three different types of microaggressions. Mircoinsults, which is what we talked about earlier. It's comments that are laden with demeaning or insulting insinuations. These are usually outside of one's awareness and are rooted in personal biases. These are comparable to the straw that broke the camel's back. They're usually mild but they add up as the years go on. The second type is microinvalidations. Which you all bravely shared with us. It is to deny or nullify one's personal truth because it doesn't line up with your own. These can extend from invalidating bisexuality like with Soleil, to womanhood like Mikkie. Microinvalidations tend to be the most dangerous because it messes with one's psyche the most. They deny the reality of a person and oppressively impose a new way of living which can drive a person into mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, etc. The third type that we didn't fully touch on, was Microassaults which are conscious and deliberate acts of discrimination. This is the typical thing we think about when we think about heterophobic assholes.

SOLEIL

So is that like the name calling, straight bashing, all of that?

CHRIS

I've gotten my head dunked in the toilet a few times. And then they poured glitter on me and said, at least now when you kill yourself, you won't look so fucking hetero. That'd be a microassault right?

CAL

Who the fuck did this? How did they dunk YOU in a toilet? You're a tank.

CHRIS

It wasn't super recent. Maybe like 4 years ago? It was a group of them. Like 4 or 5. And it was before I had bulked up so I wasn't much of a threat.

MIKKIE

Oh shit I remember that. I told the principal about it and he said that if me and Chris didn't make it so easy or tried harder to fit in, it wouldn't have happenned. And he said, he'll let the toilet dunking be punishment enough, because technically, *technically* Chris was the one disrupting the other boys with his "hetero qualities." It was fucking bullshit.

SOLEIL

See at least you knew who did it. One day I woke up to find shit on my car. Like literal human shit on my windshield. Like, if you have the guts to do that shit, literally, at least don't be a little coward about it. Let me kick your ass for it, ya feel?

CAL

Right. They're all so eager to hate, but the moment there's accountability they all run the fuck away.

BRAD

That's the deal with microassaults. They happen under three conditions. The first being anonymity. They don't want it to be linked back to them. The second is safety. They need to believe they're in a place that will either support their hate, or to tie it back to the first one, need to know that their identity won't be compromised. And three, control. A person wants to have control over the other human. They feel the need to assert their beliefs so even though they may conceal it on a day to day basis, under a situation in which they feel out of control, they take action to regain that power.

(long silence)

why the silence?

CAL

People just fucking suck man. Like we know this shit happens. We hear about it all the time. This isn't brand new information. I guess it just never occurred to me that it happens to people in our own community. It never hit me that things like this happen within such close proximity to me. To us. I just can't understand why we can't just respect one another. It LITERALLY costs zero dollars.

MIKKIE

Because that would lead to a world in which there aren't levels of status. And humans just can't do that. They have this innate need to be superior to one another. Think of children in a playpen. Put two kids with one toy and I guarantee you it'll become a battle for superiority.

CHRIS

I just wish it was different you know? I know we made a joke about it earlier, but you're right, Cal. Sometimes I do wish the gay people in this world could experience what the heteros go through on a daily basis. I wish they could feel how it is to be a part of the minority as opposed to being the default. Like why is there even a default?

SOLEIL

Well I think that's why we're doing this. So people can be educated. So we can have people out there starting the conversation. It starts with us. We get the dialogue goin, and hope to God that human compassion and decency isn't dead.

BRAD

And on that note, I think we've covered all we needed today. When we meet again next week, I ask that everyone bring an item you feel is very sentimental to your journey as a non-queer youth. It can be a journal you wrote in, /or a TV show you loved, or maybe even a food,....

/Lights fade as his volume fades as well. Blackout.

Scene V: 2 months later

Lights up on Robin's living room. CAL sits on the couch watching TV. ROBIN is offstage CAL So you have keep doing it til the water's clear? **ROBIN** Of course not! You have to keep doing it til the water is clear, TWICE. CAL And you have to do this all the time? **ROBIN** I mean Pure for Men helps but like essentially, yeah. Bottoming 101, coming soon to a CAL And bottoming, that's the one that takes the d— **ROBIN**

YES CAL.

university near you.

CAL

Am I gonna meet this boy or is this a Grindr hookup?

ROBIN

Cal, don't act brand new. Of course you're not meeting him, because of course it's a Grindr hookup. If you wanna look at him, go on my Grindr. He's the latest one, just sent me his photos. Great nudes too.

CAL

(grabbing ROBIN'S phone)

I mean, like is he at least cute? Did he send face pics too or just his humanahumana?

ROBIN

He sent face pics. His name's Byron.

(ROBIN enters, he makes eye contact with CAL)

BOTH

BYYYYYRRROOOONNNNNNNN.

They hover over ROBIN'S phone.

ROBIN

He's cute though, right?

CAL

Wow. He has such pretty eyes. Bro, he looks like a greek god.

(ROBIN swipes one more time)

OH. Goddamn. Is that real? Shit dude are you gonna be able to walk? Good luck. (HE hands ROBIN his phone back)8

ROBIN

I don't need luck. I got talent. And poppers. But speaking of talent, when are you watching me in R & J?

CAL

When's the best night?

ROBIN

Every night. Although, if we're talking about entertaintment, last night may have arguably been the wildest.

CAL

Oh right! I heard about it on twitter! What happened? People were tweeting things about it but I didn't get the full scoop.

ROBIN

Ugh I love the internet. People are so messy and I am HERE. FOR. IT.

Yeah dude so here's the tea. So like during the death scene, Jaylee's just stabbed herself and like she landed on Seamus' stomach and I guess he had a big lunch or something, but he groans and lets out this giant fart. WHILE HER FACE WAS ON HIS STOMACH. And of course the entire theatre is silent because like duhh they're both killing themselves, that's just rude, but then everyone hears the fart and starts laughing their asses off. So there are two characters who are dead onstage, an audience of 300 laughing, and Jaylee and Seamus are trying hard not to break character but are like of course shrugging in laughter. And you look in the wings and Kirk is losing their shit. It was fucking wild.

CAL

Theatre, man. Never know what you're gonna get. There's a reason why it's America's favorite activity. So other than the great fart of 2018, how's the run going?

ROBIN

Pretty good. I'm getting some laughs. And apparently a couple college scouts were at the show the other night and they reached out to me so maybe I'll get some potential recruitment things. I don't know. I'd love to do theatre in college but it's just so competitive. But if it pays for my tuition, why not? Did you ever hear back from J.U.?

CAL

Ehh yeah. They're still not gonna give me what I need. They gave me another \$1000 which is fine but like the tuition is so high it's just not plausible.

ROBIN

Well there's always that one school in New York? They gave you a good amount of financial aid, right?

CAL

Right. But that means I'd have to be in Brooklyn. And we both know what happened the last time I was in Bushwick.

ROBIN

Awh. Good old Bushwick. Hashtag Never forget.

CAL

I mean, look. J.U and New York will always be there. But the Pussy Up crew is kinda inspiring me to maybe just taking a gap year. Or like maybe going somewhere where there's a stronger Straight-Gay alliance community. I don't know yet.

ROBIN

You're really loving that group huh?

CAL

The study was life changing for me, dude. I don't know. For once, I feel like I belong ya know? I don't feel like the odd man out.

ROBIN

That's tea. Well what about tuition.

CAL

I don't know. I'll figure it out. It'll be fine. There's always being hella in debt, which like, ya know is an option too. Look, if there's anything I've learned through this entire college application process is that no one *really* knows what the fuck they're doing. So why bother pretending. I don't know what's gonna happen. But it'll happen the way it's supposed to.

ROBIN

Hallelujah for that Tea! Praise BenDeLaChrist for that Tea. Come through Carly Rae Jepsen with. THAT. TEA!

CAL

Alright that's enough. So you wanna watch Drag Race?

ROBIN

I thought you'd never ask.

BLACKOUT. END OF PLAY.